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Did the NSA target Microsoft too?

This e-mail from Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) to the National Security Agency suggests, but does not prove, that Microsoft may have been compromised by the same program used to access vast quantities of Google and Yahoo Internet traffic traveling between data centers.

CORRECTION: A previous version of this graphic incorrectly stated that this e-mail was sent by the NSA to Britain's GCHQ. It also incorrectly stated the name of Government Communications Headquarters.

Microsoft, suspecting NSA spying, to ramp up efforts to encrypt its Internet traffic

The details

Click to see the related section of the document.

What is "MUSCULAR"?

MUSCULAR is the code name for a joint program between the NSA and its British counterpart, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), that intercepts data traffic from the private links connecting Yahoo and Google servers, among others — possibly including Microsoft. It relies on an unnamed telecommunications provider to offer secret access to a cable or switch through which the traffic passes.

A tool called "MONKEY PUZZLE"

"MP" refers to MONKEY PUZZLE — GCHQ's "Unified Targeting Tool" (UTT), which allows analysts to search for "selectors" such as e-mail addresses and phone numbers. UTTs can also serve to verify that the selector can legally be searched, or provide alternative selectors, such as related phone numbers or pseudonyms, to search for if they are on record. This e-mail exchange highlights that MONKEY PUZZLE allows targeting only for Google, Microsoft and Yahoo — indicating that this collection interface is specific to those companies.

What can be searched?

A "realm" refers to the types of information sources available through MUSCULAR collection. Note that "msnpassport" is listed alongside Google and Yahoo as realms available for searches. Passport is a former Microsoft product that allowed users to sign on to several services from a single user account. In this context it is used as shorthand to refer to any Microsoft-specific selector.

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

GRAPHIC: Craig Timberg and Matt DeLong - The Washington Post. Published Nov. 26, 2013.

6 Comments

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jaysonrex1 wrote:

11/27/2013 9:40 PM EST

Since we are at war with Islam, all measures aimed at defending the nation are legit. All, without exceptions. The Left, that decided to join the Islamic Mafia in the hope that it will come on top once Islam won the war, represents the enemy within. As such, the Left must be treated as spies usually are and its leaders send for a long period to take the cure at Guantanamo rather than Carlsbad. Simple.

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ianmac37 wrote:

11/27/2013 8:22 AM EST

The real question is whether or not we are willing to live in a surveillance state. That's not how this country was set up and appears to me to be a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States.

Like | Reply | Share |

1

NSAMonitoringDevice wrote:

11/26/2013 10:50 PM EST

Here's hoping the MONKEY PUZZLE Dev Team sleeps tight, knowing the Stasi would be proud of them for spying on their fellow citizens. Sweet dreams, boys.

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3

NSAMonitoringDevice wrote:

11/26/2013 10:48 PM EST

Here's hoping the MONKEY PUZZLE Dev Team sleeps tight, knowing the Stasi would be proud of them for spying on their fellow citizens. Sweet dreams, boys.

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Chad1 wrote:

11/26/2013 9:29 PM EST

NSA wouldn't have to ask, MS would offer it up, they are the least patriotic company in the USA.

Like | Reply | Share |

jaysonrex1 wrote:

11/27/2013 9:46 PM EST

Because you say so, "Chad1"? Microsoft is one of the most patriotic companies and as such it helps NSA to unmask the Muslim mafia that wants to take over our country. The general idea is to identify all Islamic terrorists wherever they hide and liquidate them as soon as possible. WE WILL NEVER FORGET 9/11!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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